



Westminster Police Department
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Back To School

News Release

August 23, 2013

Lt. Misty Budzinski

As the new school year begins, the Westminster Police Department would like to remind motorists that state law requires vehicles to stop for school buses loading and unloading children. The only exception to the rule is the school bus that is across a divided highway with a median.

The Westminster Police Department is committed to making students safe during their trips to and from school. Officers will be monitoring bus stops and buses that travel throughout the city limits for violations of Transportation Article 21-706 a (Failure to stop for stopped school vehicle operating alternately flashing red lights) during both the morning and afternoon bus routes. The Westminster Police Department will enforce violations based on a zero tolerance policy.

Motorists are reminded to pay close attention while in neighborhoods and designated school zones, especially in the mornings and afternoons when schools open and close. Students are also encouraged to obey school bus safety rules while waiting at the bus stop and getting on and off the school bus.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) noted that 123 school-age pedestrians (younger than 19) have been killed in school-transportation-related crashes since 2001. Over two-thirds (69%) were struck by school buses and 26 percent by other vehicles involved in the crashes. There were 49 (40 %) school age pedestrians killed in school transportation-related crashes between the ages of five and seven, according to NHTSA. We have seen a 31.4 percent increase in the number of overall pedestrian fatalities across the state, compared to this same time period in 2012. "It's imperative for drivers to share the road with pedestrians and bicyclists, and to comply with pedestrian yield laws. We all have a responsibility to make sure pedestrians are safe."

We are asking drivers to be aware of school buses and the children at bus stops. Many children use crosswalks throughout the city to cross the street in order to catch their buses to school.

The Maryland law states that the driver of a vehicle shall come to a stop when a pedestrian is in a crosswalk and:

- The pedestrian is on the half of the roadway on which the vehicle is traveling; or
- The pedestrian is approaching from an adjacent lane on the other half of the roadway.

It is equally important that pedestrians use caution when crossing the street. It is the duty of the pedestrian not to suddenly leave the curb or other place of safety and walk or run into the path of a vehicle which is so close that it is impossible for the driver to stop. Pedestrians should always look in both directions and make sure that it is clear to cross. They should also cross the street between the cross walk markings. If a traffic light is present, pedestrians should cross when the traffic signal indicates that it is safe to do so. They should always make eye contact with the driver to ensure that they see them crossing.

Anyone with questions with respect to this program should contact Lt. Misty Budzinski at 410-848-4646.